

Message Text

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ACTION MC-02

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FM AMEMBASSY ADDIS ABABA
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 2087
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E.O. 11652: N/A
TAGS: MILI, EAIR, ET
SUBJ: WEAPONS FOR AVIATION ADMINISTRATION

REF: STATE 303669 AND MUNITIONS CONTROL CASE NO. 27789 (NOTAL)

1. POLCOUNS DISCUSSED EXPORT LICENSE REQUEST FOR SUBMACHINE GUNS WITH CIVIL AVIATION ADMINISTRATION DIRECTOR OF SECURITY COL TESFAYE LEGESSE. COL TESFAYE EXPLAINED THAT AS RESULT OF NUMEROUS ACTS OF SABOTAGE OVER PAST FEW MONTHS, INCLUDING TWO INCIDENTS INVOLVING DESTRUCTION OF ETHIOPIAN AIRLINES DC-3 PLANES FROM MINES LAID ON AIRSTRIP AT MASSAWA AIRPORT, CAA HAD INITIATED EXTENSIVE MEASURES TO TIGHTEN SECURITY AROUND ALL CIVILIAN AIRPORTS IN ETHIOPIA. THESE INCLUDED FENCING, SETTING UP GUARD TOWERS, AND INCREASING NUMBER OF PERSONNEL PERFORMING GUARD FUNCTIONS.

2. HERETOFORE, COL TESFAYE EXPLAINED, ETHIOPIAN ARMED FORCES AND POLICE PERSONNEL HAD BEEN DETAILED FOR AIRPORT GUARD DUTY ON ROTATING BASIS, BRINGING WITH THEM WHAT-EVER WEAPONS WERE NORMALLY ASSIGNED TO THEM. CAA NOW WISHES TO ESTABLISH STANDARDIZED WEAPONS ARSENAL UNDER ITS EXCLUSIVE CONTROL AND ACCOUNTABILITY FOR ISSUANCE
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TO GUARD PERSONNL AND RETURN TO CAA UPON COMPLETION OF ROTATIONAL TOURS. US SUBMACHINE GUNS IN QUESTION WERE CONSIDERED TO BE MOST SUITABLE WEAPON FOR THIS PURPOSE.

3. WHEN ASKED WHY SUCH LARGE NUMBER OF WEAPONS REQUIRED, COL TESFAYE POINTED OUT THAT, AS RESULT MASSAWA

DC-3 INCIDENTS, ERITREAN AIRPORTS AT MASSAWA, ASSAB, AND ASMARA HAD GUARDS POSTED AT 50 METER INTERVALS AROUND PERIMETER. SECURITY AT BILE INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT IN ADDIS ABABA AND AT DIRE DAWA WAS ALSO BEING TIGHTENED UP CONSIDERABLY. IN ADDITION, A FEW OF THE WEAPONS WOULD BE MADE AVAILABLE TO ETHIOPIAN AIRLINES SECURITY PERSONNEL FOR POTENTIAL USE DURING FLIGHT TO PREVENT HIGHJACKING OR OTHER INCIDENTS.

4. WHILE 900 SUBMACHINE GUNS IS INDEED LARGE NUMBER, RECENT SABOTAGE ACTIVITY THROUGHOUT ETHIOPIA WOULD APPEAR TO PROVIDE JUSTIFIABLE REASON FOR EPMG SECURITY CONCERN. GIVEN CAA ASSURANCE THAT WEAPONS WOULD REMAIN UNDER ITS STRICT ACCOUNTABILITY, EMBASSY RECOMMENDS APPROVAL OF PROPOSED TRANSACTION.
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Message Attributes

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